CONFERENCE ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND STATE

DRAFT REPORT
ON
THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY

NOTE

This draft has been prepared by the Chairman of the Section in the light of such consultation as circumstances permitted with advisers in different countries. Its purpose is to provide a basis for discussion when the Section meets. It is not to be taken as representing the views of the Conference, and does not commit the Conference in any way. The Conference is free to adopt, amend or reject the draft in any way that it pleases. For this reason the draft is a confidential document. No public reference must be made to its contents or quotations made from it. There is no objection to those who write about the Conference indicating in a general way and in their own words the kind of questions that are likely to engage the attention of the Conference.

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THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY

1. The task of this Section of the Conference has been described as being " the consideration of the religious significance of those spheres of life which are not ' Church,' and in particular of the relation of the Church to the common life as shaped by national tradition expressing itself in characteristic folk-ways and determined by current standards and values." Always, and particularly when Christianity is first preached in any land, Christians have to determine their relation to the whole life of the community and to the standards of social behaviour generally current. How far should they conform to these, how far refuse conformity, and how far strive to modify them ? And what is the relation of the Church as a centre of integration to other centres of integration, and notably to the Community or Nation itself ?

I. ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING SITUATION

(a) Mass-disintegration

2. The most general and the most significant phenomenon in the world of 1937 is mass-disintegration; that is the dissolution of the spiritual bonds and accepted organising principles which have hitherto controlled and given meaning to the common life. This is due largely to the new ease of inter-communication among the peoples of the earth by train, steamer, aeroplane and telegraph. In particular, the shock of the impact of the West on civilisations of the East and on the primitive peoples of Africa has been catastrophic. Everywhere men are brought into contact with whole peoples who do not share their unconscious assumptions and their habitual ways of feeling and acting. Their common customs are no longer carried on by the momentum of an unquestioned tradition. And, lately, the disintegration has been immensely speeded up by a cheap press, cheap literature, cinema and wireless. " The world has become a unity and for this high destiny mankind is not yet fit."

3. Another cause is the large-scale character of modern life. Thus, large-scale economic organisation determines where and how vast masses of the population shall live. They quit the villages for the great cities and are perpetually influencing and influenced by those with whom they have no personal contact. Owing to the size and

complication of modern life, the major events are the total result of myriads pursuing their own small self-centred purposes. But no one has planned them as a whole, and they come to the individual as fate. Personal responsibility is so widely diffused that it ceases to be felt.

4. In many areas life and livelihood have become insecure through the menace of war and unemployment. Thus the unemployed man is uprooted. He no longer knows his place, for he has no clear function in the world in which he is no longer at home. His life has lost its meaning; he is frustrated and has no outlet for his normal energies. He has no clear direction for effort and no guarantee that effort is worth while. He is typical in that he is abruptly called to live in a new and strange environment, adjustment to which may be the work of many generations.

5. Behind this lies a deeper spiritual insecurity. Everywhere the old standards of conduct are decaying because the convictions on which they rested have ceased to be held. The old loyalties and pieties have lost their unquestioned authority and no new ones have taken their place. Men are unstable, febrile, ill at ease, unsure of themselves or of how they want to live and what social obligations they will recognise. Thus the spiritual unity of the community is disturbed; for where no common standards can be assumed, men cannot trust or reckon on the actions of their neighbours. Both the individual and the community have " gone to pieces."

6. This disintegration is naturally most acute among the primitive peoples, especially those of Africa, on whom the impact of the West has fallen with shattering force, involving " the complete and rapid destruction of their spiritual and social, and consequently of their moral life " (Kraemer). But it is acute also in the East, and it is extensive in " Christendom," as is shown conspicuously in regard to the family. For centuries in the Christian West the rule of monogamy, though often broken in practice, was generally accepted in principle. Now, though the convention lingers, in very wide and apparently widening circles it has little moral reality behind it.

(b) Contemporary Attempts to Reconstruct Social and Moral Life

7. In many countries deliberate and sustained efforts are being made to take hold of and remould the common life. For Russian Communism this is based on complete devotion to a classless and equalitarian society that knows no national barriers. Corporate life is to be planned anew on severely rational principles. Impetus is derived from the exhilarating sense of a fresh start and the opening-up of boundless possibilities. Sectional and national loyalties are to be destroyed in the interest of the one overwhelming loyalty to the massed proletariat and the rubbish of the past is to be cleared

away to make room for a completely new building designed throughout for the purpose it is to fulfil. Equality and fraternity, but not liberty, are to be established and privilege is to disappear. All individuals or groups which stand in the way of the realisation of this order are to be eliminated ruthlessly during the transitional period. Thus men are to master their destiny.

8. More commonly the nation is itself the basis of reconstruction. In Japan, China, India, Turkey, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and in many other countries, national patriotism is the dominant rallying and unifying force, which wins the passionate devotion especially of the young. In these countries art and literature, manners, sport and physical culture take a strongly nationalistic colour. The nation itself is recognised as the supreme object of devotion and therefore as the authoritative source of *Sitte*, of the established conventions of conduct which make possible an orderly social life.

9. Here, in contradiction to Communism, continuity with the past is highly prized. Modern nationalism is a deliberate revival of ancient loyalties and pieties. Alterations, if required at all, must be made " in the style of the building." The sense of continuity with a remote past and a remote future gives significance and dignity to the life of the present generation, which is aware of privilege in being the inheritor of a spiritual treasure of distinctive character and of responsibility for its unimpaired transmission to posterity.

10. If the evolution of society during the last few centuries has been from corporate solidarity to individual self-determination, modern nationalism aims at a reversion to a position in which men's rights and duties spring naturally out of their station in the community. Instead of the individual's being solicited by a multitude of competing claims between which he has himself to arbitrate, the national community itself is to be the sole source of standards and values. The freedom of the individual to manage his own life as he will is deliberately sacrificed to social cohesion. That sacrifice is frequently willing and glad because the freedom of the individual has too often proved to be a freedom of vacuity, like the " freedom " of the unemployed man to spend his time as he will, which means in practice that no significant way of spending it is open to him, and that his life is emptied of meaning and savour. The individual surrenders his freedom gladly to the community which demands his uncritical obedience and loyalty but in return gives him an object in life and direction and the exhilaration of comradeship in the service of a common purpose.

11. Since man is more than mind, and the nation is more than an association for definable purposes, the appeal of Nationalism is made not only to the reason but to the whole man, including the emotions and the semi-conscious springs of action. Liberal use is

made of myth and symbol. As representative of the nation, the Emperor in Japan, the Führer in Germany, like " the Throne " in Great Britain and the British Empire, are held in mystical veneration. A form of salute, a national anthem, a flag, the funeral of an " unknown warrior," are all used for the same purpose of evoking enthusiasm. With this is connected the religious quality of the devotion, the absolute and unconditional character of the self-surrender, to the nation which is demanded and given and which has the intensity of devotion and self-sacrifice expected of a soldier in time of war. This has the quality of faith and far transcends what can be justified on purely rationalist grounds.

12. Nationalism has a markedly negative side. It implies a concentration, and its fraternity has clearly defined frontiers. It has often arisen in or been stimulated by a " war of liberation " in conscious opposition to foreign domination. The warmth of brotherhood felt among those who are within the circle is matched by a coldness or hostility to those who are without. As with Communism, there is ruthlessness towards individuals or groups who are obstacles to the closing of the ranks, and there is a deliberate turning of the back upon cosmopolitan sympathies.

13. While nationalism has endeavoured to revive ancient simplicities and pieties, it has been modern in its use for that end of all the means of propaganda and mass-suggestion made possible in recent years by science—press, cinema, wireless, etc. It has had great success in restoring vitality and confidence. Whether the re-integration effected has been on too narrow a basis and at the cost of disproportionate strains and stresses, it is too early yet to pronounce on empirical grounds.

(c) The Partial Exceptions

14. This diagnosis holds in a somewhat less degree of countries like Great Britain and the United States, France and the Scandinavian countries, Holland and Switzerland. There disintegration is less advanced, or at any rate less noticeable, and the drastic remedies, whether communist or nationalist, have hardly been attempted. There has been less breach in the continuity of national life. There is more untroubled security; and the old standards of decency, by which men would fain direct their own lives and do judge the lives of others, have still a strong hold. In some of these countries, as for example in Scotland, Christian ideas in a somewhat diluted form have entered deeply into the national mind and have done much to form the current canons of individual and social behaviour. Even when the theology which lay behind them has ceased to be believed, the old conception of the moral law and much of the old reverence for it still linger. Monogamy is still expected in high places; and the widely held codes of the gentleman and the

sportsman owe something to a christianised civilisation. At the same time, nationalism is less aggressive and conscious than elsewhere; but that may be because it has been less menaced. It is also more tolerant; but that may be due to a complacent assumption of national and racial superiority, so all-pervasive as to dispense with assertion.

15. But here, too, though the moral crisis has been delayed, there are signs of its approach. The old standards are crumbling, especially for the younger generation; and even with the elders it is doubtful whether more than the outside of the cup and platter are really cleansed. The traditional way of life has no vital philosophy behind it. The great majority of those people who never enter a place of worship, and very many of those who do, hold with conviction neither the Christian nor any other *Weltanschauung*. Behind a façade of not entirely hypocritical conformity there are only confusion and half-beliefs. To a large extent this generation is living on its moral capital: it is living on the faith of its ancestors without having a faith of its own. It is drifting; and as in politics, so in regard to the whole order of community life, the initiative seems for the time to have passed to others. But here, too, before long, crucial decisions will have to be faced.

II. THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(a) The Challenge of Secularism and of the changed relation of the Church to the Community

16. The Church originally came into the world as a tiny minority in the great Roman Empire. On the general community life of the ancient world, its manners and morals and institutions, the Church could have no formative influence. Its only responsibility was for conforming or refusing to conform, for submission or passive resistance. But after Constantine the position was reversed. The Church was theoretically co-extensive with the community; and in the Middle Ages, and to some extent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a gigantic attempt was made to mould the whole life of the Christian world on Christian principles. In practice this involved as much accommodation of Christianity to the world as of the world to Christianity. To-day there has been a reversion as yet too little realised by Christian people in many countries. Everywhere Christians are in a minority in a predominantly unchristian world. For the relation of the Church to the community the mission-field is now normative. The position in relation to Chinese life of the Church in China is more typical than the position of the Church in Britain in relation to British life; indeed, the inward reality in Britain may be more like that in China than is commonly suspected.

On the other hand, the reversion is not complete. In most countries the Christians, though only a section of the community, are still an influential section.

17. This severance and growing tension between the Church and the community is due to more than one cause. It is due partly to the Church's own failure to be loyal to its mission and to the failure of its members to make their discipleship a reality in large tracts of their lives; a failure which has naturally forfeited the respect of the world and indisposes it now to listen to anything which the Church may say. Hence behind the disintegration of the modern world and the feverish efforts of re-integration is an absorption in the present, a human self-sufficiency, and a deliberate and defiant godlessness, for which in large measure the professed servants of God are themselves responsible. But it is also due in some part to a quickening of spiritual life in the Church as shown in the great Missionary movements of the last century and a half, and in the growth of a more sensitive social conscience among Christians which makes membership more costly and mere conformity less attractive.

18. Thus the Church finds itself to-day in a new relation to the community, in which precedent is an insufficient guide. In new circumstances it is challenged to find a new understanding of its duty to the common life. Amid the widespread disintegration, the appearance in many countries of new and active centres of moral and social authority on a secular and mostly on a nationalist basis, the survival in others of a torpid semi-Christianity and, on the other hand, the signs of a fresh stirring of the Spirit in the life of the Church itself, what is the responsibility in each country of the Christian body? How far does the Church owe loyalty and obedience to the community? How far has it a duty to attempt to mould the community life, in regard to such matters, for example, as marriage customs, caste, the treatment of children and of animals, etc.? What, in these days, is God's will for the common life?

19. This challenge to the Church is deeply affected by the predominance of the impersonal in modern life. In a world of social disintegration and of outer and inner insecurity, in which men's hearts are failing them for fear, the cry "Save, Lord, or we perish!" becomes insistent. It is more than individual faults and follies that have to be overcome. The social systems and institutions by which individuals are largely moulded, indeed the whole framework of our lives, seem to have gone so awry that calamity and moral havoc are constantly being wrought by the sum of the actions of ordinary well-meaning men. It is a question whether there is not a dæmonic element at work here and principalities and powers to be wrestled with. Human society's need for superhuman guidance and support is specially plain at this time.

20. But does the Christian gospel give any such guidance ? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Has the simple Galilean world of direct personal relationships between a small number of friends and neighbours a message for the " Great Society " of to-day ? If a man, loving God with all his heart and soul, is to love his neighbour as himself, if the Christian key to human living is the personal, responsible, man-to-man (*Ich und Du*) relationship of brothers within the same Christian family, how is that to be applied in this world of large-scale organisation, of complicated group-relationships and of diffused responsibility ? How is *das Gebot* to be obeyed in the existing *Ordnungen* ?

(b) The Challenge of the New Faiths

21. In so far as devotion to the nation or to the brotherhood of proletarian man restores loyalty and comradeship, self-discipline and self-sacrifice, it is an ally to Christianity. But is not the very quality which makes it religious, its absolute claim and its demand for unconditional service and obedience, itself a challenge to Christianity ? A man cannot serve two masters. " Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Must not the Church pronounce the new faiths idolatrous ? If the nation claims to be for all its members the source of their ultimate attitude towards life, is it not usurping the function of the Church ? Is not the Church the only group that can rightly make that claim, because it is based on conscious allegiance to Christ and it is its nature to be orientated towards God and to see human life in the perspective of eternity?

22. For Christian people another difficulty in the new faiths, and especially in Nationalism, is the degree to which the community is cemented by the fostering of common antipathies. Is this reconcilable with the Christian's duty to love his neighbour as himself ? And is it not the more unchristian when, in different countries, negroes, outcasts, Jews or bourgeois are the objects of this antipathy, on account not of any individual demerit, but simply of their membership of a class ?

III. DEEPER ANALYSIS OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION

23. All Christian thinking about community must start from the Church itself. In the purpose of God the Church is the community of the followers of Christ redeemed and called by Him to be, since Pentecost, His witness and the chief instrument of His redeeming work in the world. It is one body because it has one Head, and the life of the whole body and of every member is derived from communion with Christ. It is thus to be " a colony of heaven " in a

fallen world, exemplifying by contrast the true way of human living; and its members are to be men inwardly constrained in loyal and thankful obedience to their Master, to exhibit His spirit of sacrificial love in every sphere of their lives.

24. But in empirical fact the Church has been in large measure an apostate Church. The salt of the earth has lost its savour. The messenger and bearer of redemption is itself deeply infected with sin. As a fact of Church history this is patent to the world; in the Church's slowness and conservatism, its attachment to antiquated philosophies, its fumbling ineffectiveness and, above all, in its failure to be a true community. " See how these Christians love one another " was originally a reluctant tribute; to-day it is only said in savage irony. But these things are only the symptoms of a fundamental aberration in the Church's attitude towards God. The Church has failed in whole-hearted obedience and self-surrender; and this failure has been and is due to the insidious and ever-recurring influence of individual and group egoism, through which we mistake our own wills for the will of God and profanely invoke the name and authority of Christ in favour of prejudices and purposes that are all too human.

25. It is our task here to consider how far the essential character of Christian community is being fulfilled, or can be better fulfilled in the spheres of life with which this Section of the Conference is concerned. But for the Christian body a precondition of a more effective mission to the world is the renewal of its own life as a community in a new sincerity of obedience to God.

(a) The Church and the Common Life

26. Before conversion Christian converts will have shared with their countrymen the mass of traditions and prejudices, of unwritten codes and taboos by which in fact the community endeavours to direct its life; that is, the standards of decency, of " what is done " and " what is not done," which the mass of men actually apply in judging themselves and their fellows, and by the gradual accumulation of which the normal routine of an orderly life has been formed. And if after conversion they are to continue to co-operate with their heathen neighbours these are the common standards most readily available. Similarly, the Christian layman in a " Christian " country mixing with others in his weekday life in his home, in the workshop or the office, in the public-house or on the golf links, has recourse to the generally accepted standards which he himself commonly shares. Some of these are general, such as the ideals of the " gentleman," the " sportsman," the " good pal," the " man of honour "; others are professional and specialised, such as the " good workman," the " upright business man," the " just judge," the

" chivalrous warrior." And in the background are the rational systems which moral philosophers have tried to find underlying current moral practice and precept and providing at once a justification for them and a criterion for their further development. Of all these it is necessary to ask, " What responsibilities have Christians in regard to them and what status or standards for criticising them ? And on what terms are Christians to live with their non-Christian or semi-Christian neighbours and to take part in the common life ? These questions are perennial, but the answers to them have ever to be sought anew in a changing world. The special form which the question takes to-day is due to the general crumbling of *Sitte*, already described, a crumbling which in many circles seems to leave sincerity as the only virtue and hypocrisy as the only vice.

27. Over against the world at large the Christian is bound to a distinctive way of life. He is to love God with all his heart and soul and, therefore, to love his neighbour as himself. He is to give his brethren not merely their due but an unconditional love and service; and this Christian AGAPE is qualitatively different from any natural affection or any rational benevolence which implies reciprocity. He attaches an absolute value to his neighbour, not as being such and such, more or less likeable or more or less virtuous, but simply as a fellow-man, and therefore a child of God, and therefore, like himself, one of those for whom Christ died. This attitude can only be justified on the basis of faith and not of any empirical evidence. It is based on the redemptive love of God for men revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ. The gospel has set forth the family as the regulative standard of human relationships; but the family as it is, not in quiet times, but when it has survived triumphantly the highest imaginable tension, when its members are awake with a quivering sensitiveness to all that it means. To exemplify this spirit to the best of its ability is incumbent on a sincerely Christian community—e.g., a Christian household; and through the grace of God it has been exemplified in some degree, if only fitfully, in saintly lives in every generation.

28. In the past Christians in general have, in effect, established a working compromise with the moral standards of the surrounding society. Through the influence of the Christian conscience some flagrant wrongs have disappeared from the world or have been greatly reduced. There is, for instance, more consideration for women and children, for the aged and sick, and for the poor and needy. The general conscience of civilised society has been roused to some genuine understanding that men are their brothers' keepers. But, to a larger extent, Christian people, in their ordinary weekday life in the world, have adopted the current standards of contemporary respectable society rather than made an independent Christian contribution to them. The heroic, unworldly aspect of the Christian life has fallen into the background here, even with those

to whom it is a reality in their more intimate and personal relations. When in Rome they not only do as Rome does, but they do it for much the same reasons as others. They strive to make a living at the expense of their competitors, they go to the law courts to defend their rights, and they provide for a rainy day rather than give all their goods to the poor. The only exceptions are specialists, like monks and nuns, or minorities of peculiar people, like the " sects."

29. Is all such compromise a sign of unfaithfulness and disloyalty for which penitence is due ? If so, the practice of Christianity on a large scale has never yet been attempted, and that may be the chief cause of the present plight both of the world and of the Church. Or is it a sign of a sane realism as opposed to a sentimental Utopianism ? On this issue sincere Christians to-day are deeply divided; and while that division lasts there can be little unity on practical policies. A sustained and penetrating attempt to reach a united mind upon it is one of the most urgent tasks for the Church in the immediate future.

30. The answer will be much affected by the answer to a theological question : How far has God been at work, how far is His will to be discerned, in the development of civilisation outside the immediate circle of the Christian Church and the specific Christian revelation, in Greek ethics, in Roman law, in Teutonic ethos and institutions, in the Oriental sense of the predominant importance of the things that are unseen ? How far are these things gifts of God or indirect revelations of Him ? All these questions are at once more urgent and more difficult when, as now, the secular order of life, its conventions and convictions, are themselves apparently in dissolution. For on them will depend the answer to the question which is now of supreme practical importance for Christians: Amid the general disintegration can the Christian faith serve as a centre of integration for the whole multifarious and tumultuous life of the world ? And what is its relation to other partial centres of integration ?

31. These questions must be asked, but the Church is not yet in a position to give to them any clear and united answer. Before that can be done, a much more thorough-going and prolonged examination and interchange of ideas will be necessary. It is only possible now to prepare the ground for this and to narrow down the area of uncertainty by indicating certain governing principles.

32. First, Christ is the absolute Lord of all life. His sovereignty is not constitutional or limited or shared. His writ does not cease to run " east of Suez," or in time of war, or in the complexities of modern civilisation. His commandment is not a pathetic overstatement of principles which are too easily ignored. He is not one among a number of prophets and we do not look for another. In the light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ are to be found the

living fundamental principles which for Christians are finally authoritative in every department of life. Whatever authority conflicts with this is a usurpation. In the sphere of practical life this is the fundamental principle which is safeguarded by the orthodox assertion of the divinity of Christ.

33. But, secondly, though for Christians the gospel must transcend and dominate, it does not supersede all ethical knowledge and practice derived from other sources. In a fully Christian world all the activities of life would be subjected to and judged by the gospel, but not all would be directly derived from it. God has created the whole world and has been at work in it elsewhere than in consciously Christian circles. Nowhere has He left Himself without witness, though that witness is distorted by human corruption. Thus in industry and commerce, art and literature, sport and many other spheres of social life, the bulk of the legitimate aims and activities and of the common duties are not directly derived from the Bible, but from secular traditions, professional codes, general reasoning, etc. For example, the creation of good music must be deemed to be in accordance with God's will, yet this does not mean pious and edifying music, but musical music. Such aims and duties may well be recognised also by non-Christians and by half-hearted Christians; though for the Christian they are not absolute but are always subject to criticism and overruling in the light of the Christian gospel, and, in any case, it is the Christian gospel which will ultimately govern the ways in which these different activities are integrated in the lives of Christian individuals and communities.

34. A way must be found between two opposite heresies. On the one hand it is not true that sincere Christians and non-Christians share a common basis of natural morality and so far can work together in complete unity; and that they only differ in that Christians recognise also additional virtues and duties. Even where they perform the same actions they are not really at one. Thus a traditional code of decency, an enlightened self-interest, a philosophical sense of duty, and the irresistible self-expression of Christian " Charity " may all lead to the same working rule of action, " Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." But the moral quality differs in each case. The coming of the Kingdom of Heaven is not necessarily advanced by the provision of better drains and better education, by the establishment of peace abroad and at home, nor even by decent and orderly living. It is not civilisation carried to the *n*th power. It is advanced rather by the one thing needful which the Publican had, but the Pharisee, like the rich young man, had not : an unreserved sincerity of self-surrender. Without AGAPE the most altruistic conduct is nothing. On the other hand, it is equally erroneous to hold that an upright, sober and kindly life is worthless in God's sight unless it is consciously Christian. The gulf that divides Seneca and Nero alike from St. Paul is wide and yet the moral

difference between Seneca and Nero is important. When the Christian and the humanitarian reformer co-operate in a campaign for the prevention of cruelty to children, the unity between them may be more than merely external.

35. Beyond this point Christians are still deeply divided. Towards the ways of living and standards of behaviour approved by current social convention and adapted to the disciplining of " the average sensual man," some judge that, as Christians, they must be revolutionary in their attitude, others that, as Christians, they should in the main be acquiescent. This division is the chief hindrance to united Christian action in social life.

36. Large numbers of the most devoted Christians hold that the following of Christ, once undertaken, implies that AGAPE, the essential Christian attitude, is to be the guiding principle in all relations of life. Christians, therefore, must not join or acquiesce in corporate action that is based on any lower principle. Conscious compromise is inconsistent with any sincerity of discipleship. Christ's commandment is, " Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Nothing less than absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute AGAPE in all circumstances is to be the Christian's aim. The Christian knows in advance that, being faulty and erring, he will not achieve it; but to aim at less is to betray his Master. Moreover, it is faithless to speak and act as if his possibilities were limited by his own strength: if his surrender is wholehearted he has the grace of God on which to rely. To prudential arguments about consequences he is deaf; consequences are not his responsibility; they are not in his hands, but in God's. Also, he will be on his guard against the immense temptation to self-deception. In nothing is the corruption of human nature more manifest than in the plausible sophistries by which we seek to persuade ourselves that the line of least resistance can be justified on the highest moral grounds. To such arguments the Christian reply is simple—" Get thee behind me, Satan." The duty of Christians is to strive to permeate society with Christian principles and so, God helping them, to make the kingdoms of this world the kingdom of God's Son. The tragic failure of Christendom has been that there has been so little attempt to apply really Christian principles to the common life on a large scale. " Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried " (Chesterton). The progress which has occurred has been due to a growing insight into the applicability of the exhortation " Bear ye one another's burdens " to sphere after sphere of the common life. If, however, Christians cannot persuade society to adopt the Christian way, they will withdraw and live it out together. This is not necessarily to disclaim responsibility for the corporate life, since the truest public service may be rendered by the non-conformist.

37. But a section of Christians, still larger numerically, has always taken an opposite view. In their eyes there are various limitations which make impossible any direct application of the principle of redemptive love as revealed in Jesus Christ to the whole field of the common life. First, human individuals or groups are finite, and therefore can only dispose of a limited amount of time and attention and active sympathy. In Christ the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, was extended to all mankind. With men it is possible at best towards a very few. Not only through moral defect, but in the nature of the case, it cannot be the guiding principle of our action towards the majority of those with whom we have dealings. Secondly, if there is to be common action between any large number of persons, that implies a formula of some sort. But any formula or programme or "rule of life" for a group must fall below the level of the spontaneous action of its best members; for such action, e.g. action in the spirit of 1 Corinthians xiii, arises not in obedience to any rule, but as the irresistible welling up of spontaneous feeling. It is no more explicable by a rule than the highest achievements of artistic genius are explicable by any conceivable æsthetic formula. Thirdly, for joint action between Christian and non-Christian there is a further limitation. (It is hardly possible to avoid such joint action altogether; and any avoidance which is less than total is more effective for the quieting of uneasy Christian consciences than for any real relief from responsibility for the common life.) Social rules which are to bind non-Christians and semi-Christians as well as the converted, and which require their concurrence if they are to be effective, can only prescribe the highest standard for which the communal mind is yet ripe; for it is necessary to reckon not only with opinions which can be changed fairly quickly, but with ingrained assumptions and sentiments which control the routine of life and are only very gradually alterable. The justification for such participation is that "half a loaf is better than no bread." It is certainly the Christian's duty in every situation to do what is God's will for him in that situation; there can be no compromise there. But it may be God's will for him to do in that situation what regarded in the abstract would be sub-Christian.

38. Of this second view there are two main forms. According to the first of these there is available a moral standard for the common life which is not the full commandment of the Christian gospel, but has some relation to that and should very gradually approximate more nearly towards it. This has been most fully worked out in the conception of "Natural Law" embodied in the Catholic tradition. Here is found a normative ideal for the common life, derived originally not from the Bible but from an analysis of secular institutions and standards, combined with philosophic reflection. This gives at once a justification for existing conventions and codes, and a standard for their improvement. It is an ideal, but not a Utopian

ideal. It is a possible common basis for Christian and non-Christian: it embodies the virtues of justice and temperance, but not of faith, hope and charity. Something similar is found in the conception of " the Moral Law " current in Anglo-Saxon countries. This was, in fact, derived largely from the Decalogue, but it was regarded as having validity independent of its theological origin, and so, in the eyes of all right-thinking persons, as having a claim to govern both private and public life. In Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr's paper on " Religion and the Common Life " the conception of " Justice " plays a somewhat similar part. To be willing to give other men their due and to be content with one's own due falls far short of Christian AGAPE. But a world in which this principle was generally practised would be a far better world than the present.

39. The second form of this view, derived from Luther and predominant in recent Protestantism, is based on a more radical pessimism. Here, too, the standards which govern the Christian in his intimate personal life are not regarded as applicable in the wider sphere of the common life, but for that there is no generally applicable moral standard. *Sitte*, i.e. the whole complex of sentiment and implicit moral judgment and custom which actually governs the life of the community, is to be regarded as part of the framework in which our lives are set by the ordinance of God. In their existing form these are far from " Christian," being largely the result of sin. Nevertheless, they serve by God's mercy to protect the human race, not indeed from sin itself, but from the ruin which is the natural result of sin; and they thus keep open the possibility of salvation, though they cannot minister directly to it. They are dykes which keep out the flood; and the danger of chaos is so great that any order is better than none. Accordingly, ideals, as such, are untrustworthy. Human corruption infects so deeply all our efforts at betterment that we cannot take even gross evils as a sign that a social system of which they are an integral part must be mended or ended. The authority of the actual moral order in any community does not depend for Christians on its approximation to " Natural Law " or to any other moral standard—still less to the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount. The proper question is not " Does it approximate to the Christian law of love ? " (that is anyhow not to be expected; and the suggestion is only conceivable on the basis of a sentimental watering down of such sacrificial love into a mere general amiability), but " Does it help to avert the collapse of civilisation ? " If so, its maintenance must be deemed to be in accordance with the sovereign will of God. Hence a modification of the existing order will only be justified if it springs out of the needs of the actual situation and not on any general principle, however " Christian."

40. To obtain further light and—D.V.—far more of a common mind on the issue discussed in the last four paragraphs is of the most urgent importance for the whole Church. For in the world

as a whole to-day, and even in " Christian " countries, the Church has little vital impact on the common life as a whole. This is largely due to a pervading sense of unreality which affects both the reaction of the world to the Church and the mind of the Church itself. The world feels, when the Church adapts itself to current standards, that —consciously or unconsciously—Christians are hypocrites ; they do not really believe what they preach, for they don't attempt to practise it. On the other hand, with the more uncompromising Christians, the world feels that these are brave words but quite unrealistic ; and that their utterers belong to that type of idealist in whom the wish to believe is paramount, who will not face up to realities, and who is for ever deceiving himself with beautiful dreams. And in both cases the Christians in their hearts feel something of this themselves, and their spiritual power and effectiveness is fatally weakened by unconfessed and only half-conscious misgivings. Before all things it is necessary that the Christian message for the common life should regain " the bracing sense of effective reality."

(b) Church and *Volk*

41. For the present generation the attempt to reach a Christian view of *Volk* must start from a realistic analysis of what *Volk* actually is in the modern world. *Volk* is a form of " community " and is therefore to be distinguished from " association." An association can be defined by its purpose. It is formed for particular ends such as trade, recreation, study, mutual security, the promotion of this and the prevention of that. As a rule its membership is voluntary. A community is the whole of the people living continuously together in one area when, as such, they share a common social life and form, and feel themselves to be a social whole. It is a natural growth rather than an artificial creation. Its purposes are too many and too indefinite to be enumerated, and all of them together do not fully explain its existence or its character. Its cohesion is largely subconscious and semi-instinctive and is more lasting than that of an association. Its fellow-feeling and the purposes it subserves are not the cause of its members living together, but rather flow out of that.

42. At different historical periods, group-units of very various extent and character have been the chief representatives of community life; the village-community, the tribe, the " city-state," even perhaps the Roman Empire. To-day, incomparably the most important in influencing the life and character of its members and in evoking their attachment is the " Nation " or " Volk." This is a large community, normally inhabiting a single territory, or at least having done so in the past; and it is usually, though not always, co-extensive with the State, and where this is not so there is likely to be a condition of unstable equilibrium. In principle it is closely

connected with the family. It has grown, or is reputed to have grown, out of a single family like the children of Israel, or out of a collection of families. It speaks a common language, it has a common history. It has common habits of feeling, action and thought, common sentiments, customs and culture. Just as an individual is a psycho-physical unity, so a nation normally has common physical traits on a basis of common descent, and also common mental traits, so that the typical Frenchman, German, and Englishman are easily distinguishable. Such traits have been gradually acquired and are only gradually modified; and they are transmitted by inheritance from generation to generation. But though most nations exhibit these traits, perhaps no one of them is indispensable ; in the people of the United States many of them are absent. Probably the most important is a common history, or at least the expectation of a common destiny. For above all, a nation is a nation because its members feel themselves to be so and, consciously or implicitly, are resolved to remain so.

43. The predominant place of the nation is general in the modern world, but the meaning and importance of nationality vary much in different nations. At one end of the scale are peoples in whom the rebirth of the sense of nationality has lately come as a profound and shattering vital experience to which all else must be related, like a volcanic eruption in the glow of which the whole landscape is lit up. At the other is the people of the United States, which is and feels itself a nation, but which has no single common blood, language or culture, and for which a common soil is only a recent acquisition. Again, for a Frenchman himself, and for understanding him, it is obviously far more important that he is a Frenchman than that he is a Gascon or a European; for a German, that he is a German than that he is a Bavarian. With a Briton, it is less obvious whether it is more significant and matters more that he is British or that he is Scottish, Welsh or English. And with a French Canadian it is far from clear whether he is primarily French, Canadian, British or American; and with a recent immigrant from Europe to the United States, whether it is his old or his new *Volk* to which he most belongs. That is, *Volk* may be unitary, or it may be federal; it may involve the individual in a single loyalty or in a number of loyalties.

44. The specific Christian attitude towards *Volk* in the modern world thus understood must depend on the place Christians assign to it in the Divine Economy. And here Christian thinking must start from a paradox. On the one hand it must descry God Himself at work in history, and hence in the existing distribution of mankind into separate nations, and in the development of each one of these; these are an upshot of God's creative activity. That each nation seems to have its distinctive contribution and mission to the world is to be ascribed to God's purpose, and in any given case, in default of strong reasons to the contrary, there is some presumption

that what menaces the continued life and development of a nation is contrary to His will. On the other hand, the very being of nations, as of individuals who compose them, is deeply infected and distorted by sin. The history of every nation is defaced by national crimes; and every nation has its distinctive national defects as well as its distinctive excellences. More fundamental still, even the best things in national life have in them an element of sinful self-assertion and self-glorification, of indifference and contempt for " the lesser breeds without the Law " and of the will to lord it over them. Everywhere in the life of the *Volk*, as in all human affairs, these two elements have been, and are, at work; and it is not possible to disentangle them and to say with confidence, " This is the work of God " and " That is the work of the Devil." From this paradox all Christian thinking about *Volk* must start. It must see in *Volk* at once the promise of, and a peril to, the love of the Kingdom of God. (Niebuhr.)

45. For the individual the former aspect is normally more important. To him his *Volk* is " given." He is born into it as he is born into his family. It is not merely an environment in which he is set or a material with which he has to operate; it has a claim on him and he owes it loyalty. Even if, politically, he should become a subject of another State, he cannot entirely divest himself of moral obligation towards his own kinsfolk and his own people. " The awful Author of our being is the Author of our place in the order of existence; and having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactick, not according to our will but according to his, he has, in and by that disposition, virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned to us." (Burke.) Such an obligation may be more binding on the individual than any contractual obligation arising out of his own consent. Duty to *Volk*, like duty to parents, in the last analysis is duty to God. Thus there is a normal obligation on the members of a *Volk*—that is, an obligation which holds unless and until it is overridden by a higher obligation—to play their part in the life of the *Volk* in accordance with the accepted folkways. It is clearly unchristian to repudiate this in the interest of a lawless self-assertion; it is probably unchristian to do so in the interest even of an abstract humanitarianism such as that of the French or Russian Revolutions, and thus to sacrifice the aid towards integration of the natural organic bonds that bind men together.

46. But this obligation is rather to loyalty than to obedience or conformity; and on occasion loyalty itself may require nonconformity to the general will. Thus the prophets of Israel constantly withstood, rebuked and prophesied against their own people and its constituted authorities; and that is why they were stoned. But in so doing they transgressed no patriotic duty. They were themselves the true patriots because they spoke and acted, not in " abject

submission " to the " occasional will " of their nation, but out of a deep and true insight into the things that belonged to its peace.

47. The Christian Church in any country consists predominantly of members of the people of that country; in Japan of Japanese, in Spain of Spaniards, in England of Englishmen, who, as such, owe a duty of loyalty, and where possible of conformity, to their own people. It has, however, a unique character in that its centre is beyond this world and it is based on conscious allegiance to God in Christ. It has its own distinctive task of witness and worship which for its members constitutes an imperative transcending all others; to submit to interference in its performance of this would be apostasy; it would be to obey man rather than God. In addition, it can view folkways from a perspective unavailable to its countrymen, in the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, and it has thereby a prophetic and critical outlook upon the national life as a whole. Thus in primitive communities the Christian converts will at once renounce for themselves, and will influence their heathen neighbours to renounce, such communal practices as cannibalism or polygamy, and various forms of brutality and moral corruption which have the prestige of established custom and often the obstinate support of vested interests.

48. The ground on which Christians refuse to admit an absolute claim upon them of their *Volk*, and view it not only devotedly but critically, is twofold. First, as already stated, the nation and its ways are throughout involved in sin and sometimes this is glaring. But secondly, even when the seamy side of national life is not emphasised, what is good may always have to give way to what is better. Thus Jesus among the doctors in the Temple did what must cause his parents anxiety and trouble, not, apparently, because of any moral defect in the household at Nazareth, but because on occasion a normal obligation—fully acknowledged and honoured at other times—must be set aside for the sake of the yet more imperious obligation of being about His heavenly Father's business. Later, He said that He came to set men at variance with their nearest kin, that no one who loved father or mother more than Him was worthy of Him, and He pronounced a blessing on all who for His name's sake should leave parents or children. To Jesus and His disciples the claims of family or *Volk* were genuine, but far from absolute.

49. The Christian attitude to *Volk*, then, will be twofold. A nation is a being with a long, and apparently an indefinite, span of life. Each generation has inherited from the remote past as an heirloom a distinctive ethos and culture by which its own mind and character have been shaped. Of this, like the holder of an entailed property, it is rather a trustee than an owner. It is its duty to preserve that inheritance and to transmit it unimpaired, and if possible enhanced, to posterity. This is a doctrine which has strong support in the

natural affections and habitual feelings of men. More successfully than any other form of society the nation has evoked the passionate attachment of large numbers of ordinary men. The continuance of the nation and its well-being is felt to be far more valuable to the world, and more probably to the will of God, than the survival of individuals (which in any case cannot be long), and it is felt to have a powerful claim on the self-sacrifice of individuals. The English poet who asks his countrymen "Who dies if England live?" expresses in English idiom a common sentiment. For Christian as for other members of a modern nation the maintenance of the corporate existence of their nation is an object with a high claim upon them.

50. But it may be transcended by a higher claim. "Patriotism is not enough." It is normally the Christian duty of the individual to preserve his own life in order that he may have further opportunities of serving God and of doing His will; but on special occasions and for a sufficient end it becomes his duty to sacrifice his life. Though the nation is of greater value than the individual, and though not all the moral restraints which limit the individual's right of self-preservation may apply to the nation, the same principle holds good. There is a moral price too great to pay—in dishonesty and in callous disregard of the rights of others. Moreover, we cannot assume that God wills the continuance of all the existing nations any more than that He did will the continuance of all those of old time that are now no more. The right of a nation to continued national existence may be forfeited by national sin, as with the Jews of old time. Possibly also nations, like individuals, have a limited, though far longer, span of life, and, by the ordering of God, must in time disappear to make room for others. Even if a nation is blotted out by natural catastrophe or by foreign enemies, or if, like the Jews, it is dispersed over the face of the earth, the world is not necessarily deprived for ever of its specific *Erbgut*. The spiritual legacies of Greece and Rome were ultimately inherited by the descendants of their barbarian conquerors. But in the providence of God even these may be transitory; and types of civilised life of high value in themselves may perish to make way for others, so that human life may never become stereotyped.

51. A special problem, of urgent practical importance to-day, arises when the preservation of a national *Erbgut* appears to be menaced by the presence in the national territory of large numbers of an alien *Volk*, and particularly when these aliens belong to a different race. This is one form of the general problem of the social relations of white and black, or of white and yellow, or of aryan and non-aryan, raised in the modern world by the intermixture in one territory of different races. Here national public opinion is wont strongly to condemn intermarriage, on the grounds partly of a semi-instinctive repulsion and partly of eugenic considerations, and to

discountenance it by all available forms of social pressure. But if intermarriage is to be avoided, there must obviously be a strict limitation of social intercourse and of opportunities of showing neighbourliness and sympathy, to which the members of the dominant race may in any case be indisposed. They will " keep themselves to themselves " and will keep aliens at arm's length. Further, where there has been an extensive gradual infiltration of alien elements, there may be a concentrated communal effort to expel such elements from the communal territory, or at least to deprive them of any fullness of communal membership. Apart from legal weapons, association with them is refused; they are " boycotted " or " sent to Coventry." For the Christian, it is an urgent question how far such folk actions and attitudes can be reconciled with the Christian commandment to love his neighbour as himself, and the free outgoing self-giving of the Christian to all his brother-men as sons of God, and particularly to his fellow Christians.

52. This question is not confined to any one country in Europe. Indeed the challenge to the Christian conscience of such social exclusiveness is clearly greater where, as in North America, the aliens were first introduced into a country by violence and at the instance and solely for the benefit of the people which denies them social equality. It is greater still where the members of the dominant *Volk* are themselves an alien minority in a land originally belonging to those over whom they lord it, as in many parts of Africa and of Asia to-day. Before Christians of any of the dominant countries of the world can rebuke effectively their Christian brethren of other lands, they will have to set their own houses in order.

53. But is rebuke called for ? The answer does not lie on the surface. To rule out *a priori* all limitations on intimacy is only logically possible to those who would disallow in all circumstances any barrier to intermarriage between members of different races, an extreme position which few Christians maintain. If, as has been commonly supposed, the results of certain kinds of mixed marriage were likely to be eugenically unfortunate, and if there were natural repulsions as well as natural affinities, that might be part of God's ordering of the world and a sign of His will. In that case, to give heed to it in our social arrangements would not betoken hardness of heart.

54. On the other hand Christians are at the very least bound to scrutinise such exclusions most stringently and to consent to them, if at all, only on the strongest necessity and with deep reluctance. They imply that we allow matters, not unimportant but still of secondary importance, like the colour of his skin and the nationality of his parents, to determine our treatment of a man rather than what is of primary importance, namely, that he is a son of God and that he is himself, i.e., this entirely unique person; and on this side too the danger of self-deception is great. We may see ourselves as the

altruistic custodians of a cultural and spiritual treasure when this is only a rationalisation of base and primitive passions, or when we are really moved by collective self-interest, e.g. by a threat to our livelihood. Thus Spartans needed helots, American planters needed slaves, British colonists in Africa need cheap labour; and so they cannot admit a claim to fellowship and social equality from those who are so useful to them as inferiors. Further, it is clear that in loyalty to Christ, Christians cannot take part in the raising of institutional barriers between races or classes if unassured in their own hearts and consciences that at a deeper level of personal life they can still maintain with such outcasts a Christian fellowship which is real and not merely nominal. Otherwise, refraining from loving any of their brothers whom they have seen, how could they genuinely love God whom they have not seen ? But can they in fact have any such assurance ? An agreed policy of segregation as between races based on mutual respect would be one thing; an imposed one based on dislike and fear and a confident claim to moral and intellectual superiority is quite another. And dislike and fear play so large a part in promoting the policy of barriers, while those who believe in the policy are so commonly driven to stimulate dislike and fear in order to secure the requisite mass-support, that, though this double attitude may be conceivable in principle, it is Utopian to expect it in practice.

55. Whether a policy of segregation is necessary and justified in any given case will depend partly on the answers given to certain questions which are not theological, e.g. what is the eugenic effect of racial intermixtures of various kinds ? How close is the correlation between physical and mental qualities ? If intermarriage between members of remote stocks (e.g. white and black) is now normally undesirable, is that on physical grounds or on grounds of existing differences of education and outlook, which may even now not be universal, and which in any case need not be permanent ? What are the relative values of pure and mixed blood as a physical basis for moral and cultural life ? Here the varying history of different peoples inclines them to different conclusions. Thus in Germany to-day more stress is laid on the importance of preventing the contamination of the national heritage by alien influences than in England, where the population is notoriously itself the product of an admixture of Celtic, Saxon, Danish and Norman-French stocks and where the absorption at different times of numbers of French and German *émigrés* is commonly thought to have enriched the national life; or than in the United States with its recent and extensive amalgamation of a far greater variety of stocks. Enrichment or corruption ? That is the question. The answer may be a matter of degree; a national tradition may be able to absorb a moderate foreign element with advantage where it would be destroyed by a large one. On these questions scientists differ among themselves, their differences at present having some tendency to

follow national lines; and since questions of value are involved, there is no purely objective scientific criterion. Here, therefore, conclusions must still be tentative.

56. But the fundamental question is theological. In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. Can Christians then take part or acquiesce in the putting asunder of those whom God has not put asunder ? For the Church this challenge must be faced first and foremost, not by way of lecturing the world, but in its ordering of its own life. In its services of public worship, that is in the immediate and consciously realised presence of Christ, there can be no legitimate place for any barriers of race or colour between man and man. But, if so, as Christians we must ask ourselves whether we are not evading our responsibility to God in allowing our lives to be cut in half by behaving to an alien as an equal and a brother in church on Sunday and omitting to do so on Monday in the street or the train or the tramcar, in our business, our recreation, or in our homes. Whatever the answer, for the Church and for individual Christians in the present generation, the question is inescapable : " Must we not now recognise that all discriminations based on race and colour are contrary to the will of God ? "

57. While much work is still to be done before a clear Christian understanding of *Volk* can emerge, it is certain that any Christian view of *Volk* must have two aspects. As against the individualist and the mere cosmopolitan it will affirm the high value of *Volk* and its strong claim on the loyalty of its members, whom, under God, it has done much to form. Of all human groupings the family and the *Volk* are the firmest guarantees of the stability and the continuity of life; they are by far the strongest natural ties, and so, presumably, most closely related to the purpose of God. But with equal emphasis it must deny that those values and obligations are absolute. To treat them as such would be idolatry; it would be paying to the creature, and to a sinful creature, the reverence that is due to God alone. It would indeed in effect be to revive a pre-Christian form of paganism, the worship of the tribal god. The *Volk* or nation does not embrace the whole of human activity, it does not exhaust the legitimate interests and values or the most imperious obligations of the individual. For in no human community, but only in God, do men wholly live and move and have their being.

IV. THE DIRECTION OF ADVANCE

58. The first need is for the Church to deepen its own inner life. The original contribution of Christianity to the problem of human living is less a new ethic than a new dynamic. The question which

it solves is less *what* to do, than *why* to do it, and above all *how* to be able to do it. But if life is to be lived in obedience to the holy will of God and by the power of His grace, that has implications as to what kind of things it is right or wrong to do; though these will only become clear gradually to those who are faithfully trying to live in that obedience and by that grace.

59. The second need is for the Church to appreciate its own limitations and not to claim to give authoritative guidance to the world where it is not really, or at least not yet, in a position to do so. Some of these limitations are permanent. The Church never has been, and on earth is never likely to be, a community of genuinely converted and like-minded men with a strict internal discipline. It is thus necessarily slow-moving: it cannot rightly or effectively make corporate pronouncements on social and ethical questions which do not represent the judgment and sentiment of the great majority of its members. But there are also temporary limitations imposed by the present position. We have to recognise that Christian thinking has not yet fully grappled with the problems of the modern world, as for example in the time of Aquinas or of Calvin it did succeed in grappling with the problems of the world of those days. The present chaos in Christian thought on matters of social conduct, which is the main reason for this Conference, cannot immediately be removed. So the Church cannot corporately formulate even a provisional set of governing principles for social life in the twentieth century.

60. But, thirdly, there are two steps which the Church can now take towards hastening the day when such a formulation will be possible. The one is to organise further ecumenical thinking on those problems as to which we find ourselves at present most perplexed or divided, and thus carry forward the work which in this Conference, and the preparation for it, has been begun. It is only out of a resolute facing of our differences in a spirit of responsibility and of prayerful waiting upon God that a common mind can emerge. The other step is to encourage adventurous experiments in Christian living by the Christian household, the Christian congregation, or by small groups of Christian friends. Christians must undertake such experiments in their own immediate environment or calling, in regard to which they have special knowledge and special responsibility; for example, in a more than normally scrupulous use of their money, or in exceptionally strenuous efforts to befriend those in trouble or disgrace, or in amending their own professional practice in accordance with fresh moral scruples or insights of whose validity they cannot yet be entirely certain, or in bridging barriers of race or class wherever they find them in their own neighbourhood. Some of these experiments will eventually approve themselves, and by their example will lead to a general recognition and acceptance of higher Christian standards. Others

will turn out in the end to have been mistaken in their interpretation of the mind of Christ; but it is by such a process of trial and error that advance is made. Such local efforts in more faithful Christian living will give new data for ecumenical thinking just as ecumenical thinking will stimulate and guide local action. Herein to-day is the special responsibility and the special opportunity of the Christian layman.